

Janis Kozlowski: ... the down side of them [*laughter*]. So you were a pretty young guy when this kind of thing was happening. How did that affect you?

John Pletcher: Well, let's see, that would have been Thanksgiving Day of 1942. I would have been 27 years old.

Janis Kozlowski: So when you had these missions like that, like the two you just talked about, how did you sleep at night? Did you worry about things?

John Pletcher: Oh, no! It didn't worry me at all.

Janis Kozlowski: That was your normal days work?

John Pletcher: Normal days work - if you had a mission to fly and the weather would permit - most of our work, really, was done patrolling, looking for any Japanese shipping or any activity that we could attack and we didn't, well a few B-26 raids were made on Kiska, but most of that was done by the B-24s and B-17s. The B-26s were used for patrolling around the islands and looking for shipping. We were equipped to do low level bombing.

You see, with the weather the way it was out there, usually there was a weather overcast and you couldn't do altitude bombing as a normal bomber was designed to do, like the B-17 and B-24s a lot of times they went out and they didn't have radar, the radar was in its infancy at that time, so they didn't have radar to find the target. So some of their bombing was done through the clouds and taking a bearing off a mountain top on the island of Kiska, if it happened to be sticking up through the cloud deck, they would take an angle off of that and drop their bombs sighting on that mountain top. Because, there was no other way of seeing any target.

And the B-24s and B-17s were not supposed to go in at low altitude because they were big and they were slower and they figured their chances of being shot down on a low approach like that would be greater than the B-26, because the B-26 was pretty fast. If you put the power on it, on a run in you could probably do 250 mph with the bomb bay doors open if you were on a low level bomb run. The airplane would do 300 or better with the bomb bay doors closed and flaps and gear up. It was a pretty fast airplane.

We normally cruised at a little over 200 and on the way back from Attu, on that mission, I had it way under 200. In fact, I had the engines slowed down and manifold pressure cut way back and we were just literally almost hanging in the air coming back trying to conserve fuel, and we had the mixture in the lean position and doing everything we could to save the fuel.